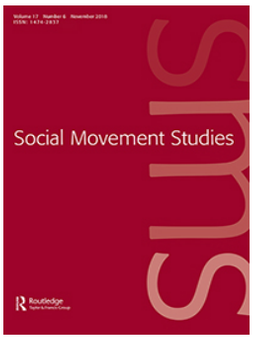

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When anger meets joy: how emotions mobilise and sustain the anti-coal seam gas movement in regional Australia

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ABSTRACT

In many countries, the expansion of unconventional gas exploration and development has been met with grassroots resistance; the scale and depth of which has surprised even movement organisers. An often-remarked feature of the movement's success is the teaming up of farmers and environmental organisers, historically at odds with one another on other environmental issues. This paper explores the role of emotions in building alliances, and mobilising opponents of coal seam gas (CSG) in a particular rural setting in Australia. Drawing on interviews with anti-CSG movement participants, the paper argues that emotions help to explain how the movement has mobilised and sustained alliances despite differences between movement participants. We find that while anger plays a central role in mobilising various anti-CSG actors, it is the combination of anger with joy which helps to sustain the anti-CSG movement in regional Australia. Our analysis reveals three key sites (individuals, within groups, and the public arena) where these emotions are expressed and negotiated, and emphasises the influence of the rural context in this process.

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Conflict; emotions; fracking; movement; rural; unconventional gas

In many countries, the expansion of unconventional gas exploration and development has been met with grassroots resistance, the scale and depth of which has even surprised movement organisers (Organ, 2014). This is particularly noteworthy given recent research revealing that the mobilisation of groups against energy infrastructure is neither inevitable nor easily explained by prevailing social movement theories (Wright & Boudet, 2012). In Australia, the anti-coal seam gas (CSG) movement is composed of urban and rural people from across the political spectrum, united by common concerns about the impacts of CSG on land, water and affected communities. Specific concerns cut across social, environmental and economic issues. They range from impacts on water, health risks, community cohesion, justice for Indigenous people, to broader concerns around decision-making and government collusion with industry, energy supply, and global climate change (Arashiro, 2017; Measham, Fleming, & Schandl, 2016).

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The emotional content of the debate over CSG development is one of its most striking features. This is despite industry and government attempts to frame the issue as simply a matter of managing technical risks (Boyd, 2013). Concerns are often expressed with fear, anger, frustration and outrage. At face value, it is unsurprising that the number of real and perceived risks from CSG development, alongside the prospect of transformed rural landscapes and communities, might incite complex and deeply emotional responses (Devine-Wright, 2009; Gross, 2007). Emotional responses are not unique to opponents of CSG. Proposed CSG developments also spark strong support from those excited by the prospect of increased employment opportunities, especially in regions with aging populations and a lack of employment opportunities for younger people (Brown, 2014).

This paper builds on the growing body of literature on emotions and social movements showing how emotions intersect with mobilisation, de-mobilisation (across individual and collective scales), and the development of intra-movement solidarities (Ahmed et al., 2016; Bosco, 2006; Clough, 2012; Flam, 2015; Rodgers, 2010; Woods, Anderson, Guilbert, & Watkin, 2012). These studies offer useful insights for understanding the relationship between emotions and movement dynamics in a wide range of areas including environmental controversies that surround energy (Askland, 2017; Cass & Walker, 2009; Ey, Sherval, & Hodge, 2017; Lai, Lyons, Kyle, & Kreuter, 2017), forestry (Buijs & Lawrence, 2013), and environmental risk (Jacobson, 2016). In this context, the 'emotions ladder' developed by Woods et al. (2012) provides a particularly useful metaphor to understand how different emotions become prominent as protest movements proceed over time. Woods et al. rightly suggest that apart from the particular issues that trigger protest activity (in their case the issue of hunting in rural Britain), the existing, or 'background' emotions (see also, Jasper, 2011) such as those related to care for place, usually scale up to anger about a perceived threat and can easily escalate further to feelings of frustration. Yet, Woods et al.'s analysis remains silent of the particularities of rural contexts in shaping the contours of emotional enrolment, especially in relation to movement dynamics – a theme we seek to explore in some detail in our analysis.

To understand how different emotions interact with each other, how the rural context influences this interaction, and the way people mobilise against large scale energy projects, we focus on the anti-CSG movement opposing the Narrabri Gas Proposal (NGP) – a controversial CSG project proposed in north-west New South Wales (NSW) in Australia. We analyse this case by employing an 'affective practices approach', which is particularly well suited to draw out the dynamic and contextual features of emotions in social movements. The affective practices approach captures the idea that emotions are typically repetitive and familiar, but are also very context specific (Wetherell, 2012) and not immediately knowable or communicable (Wetherell, 2013). We argue that examining the dynamics of how affect bubbles up at different scales, from movement participants, to in-group dynamics, and finally to public expression, can help us understand 'surprising' or unexpectedly intense emotional responses to CSG and, in this case, the birth of a grassroots anti-coal seam gas movement. In other words, rather than trying to ascertain or pin down particular emotions found in the Narrabri anti-CSG movement, we explore how emotions, while rooted in historical

ways of 'doing' emotion, also are shaped through individual and collective experiences in the rural context.

Our analysis reveals that core aspects of rural identity and everyday affective experiences have a profound effect on the capacity of people to collectively mobilise and respond to an external threat, such as CSG development. There is a strong social imperative for people in small rural communities to get along with each other and to constructively negotiate disagreements (Alexander, 2015). This affects the way negative emotions such as anger or frustration are expressed in a small community context and as part of the anti-CSG movement. In our case, we find that while anger is the central emotion fuelling the anti-CSG movement in and around Narrabri, how people 'do anger' in a rural context is key to understanding how movement participants come together and negotiate their differences. The small rural community context also enables movement participants to combine anger with the joy of 'doing community' together. Our analysis shows that while negative emotions (such as anger, fear, and distress at the idea of CSG development) play a crucial role in the formation of the anti-CSG movement, it is the combination of negative emotions with positive ones (such as joy of social connection and the love of place) which helps to sustain this movement and the alliances built in and around Narrabri.

The paper begins with a conceptual discussion about the role of emotions in social movements to foreground the practice-based approach we take. We then provide a background to our case study in the context of the broader anti-CSG movement in Australia, as well as an outline of our research methods. We discuss how emotions enliven mobilisation and solidarity building in our case study by focusing on the different roles they play in individuals, within groups, and the public sphere. Finally, we reflect on the empirical and conceptual implications of these findings for existing and future research on emotions in social movements.

Emotions in social movements: the affective practices approach

Social movements are rich in emotion. Emotions such as anger, fear, and shame play a central role in the formation of social movements, the recruitment of potential members, and in the interaction of movements with their targets (Della Porta & Giugni, 2013). They can help or hinder mobilisation efforts and affect the success or failure of social movements. As such, the emotional dimension of social movements has long been the focus of theoretical and empirical research (for an overview see Jasper, 2011; Ruiz-Junco, 2013). Generally, the theoretical underpinnings of much of the research on emotion can be found in cultural approaches to emotion, which understand it as an embodied evaluative response to the environment (some refer specifically to the cognitive appraisal approach e.g. Jasper, 2014). Although some researchers have begun toying with cultural theories of affect (e.g. Papacharissi, 2016), the requirement of explaining the workings of social movements has meant that researchers have typically turned to more empirically-grounded theories from sociology. In this sense, the task has been about 'bringing in' emotion to existing concepts such as framing and collective identity, as exemplified in Arlie Hochschild's concept of emotional labour (Hochschild, 1983) or Yang's (2000) work on 'emotional achievement' as a motivator for movement participation. These studies have provided valuable insights into how

emotions can be managed, channelled or harnessed in a way that contributes to the success of social movements (Ruiz-Junco, 2013).

There now seems to be increasing interest in analysing emotion as a force in its own right in everyday movement work – not just as adding interesting psycho-social texture to prevailing concepts. For instance, authors such as Clough (2012) and Gould (2009) see emotion as adding another structural 'layer' onto social analysis of movements – Gould for instance uses the concept of emotional 'habitus'. These are promising conceptual avenues, helping us to see emotion as important on its own terms. The dynamism evident in both Clough (2012) and Gould's research prompts us to question, as Wetherell does (Wetherell, 2012, 2015), whether concepts such as Pierre Bourdieu's 'habitus' and Raymond William's 'structures of feeling' are adequate for revealing the role emotion plays in the creation and workings of social movements.[1] The dynamism of emotion in movements has been noted by many authors (e.g. Jasper, 2014), which raises the empirical question of how can one study something that is so mobile, yet clearly also patterned.

In her fascinating analysis of the mobilisations against government neglect of HIV-Aids victims in the United States in the 1980s, Gould (2012) shows how the emotions associated with loss and shame were transformed into pride and anger. Her analysis reveals three conceptual points that underscore the dynamism of emotion. First, emotions are non-static: whether privately felt or generated in a collective, they can change due to a momentous event or in relation to the engagements of everyday life. Second, they are combinatory: emotions come bundled together – despair can coexist not only with feelings of grief and sadness, but also with an activating anger. How despair combines with or gets tethered to other feeling states, affects its political potential. Third, the way emotions work is indeterminate: the same feeling may lead to a range of effects.

In this paper, we argue that Wetherell's (2012) 'affective practices' approach is a productive avenue for studying the dynamic nature of emotion in social movement research. There is much that is similar with prevailing approaches – for Wetherell, emotions are relational and embodied. Yet what is distinctive about Wetherell's approach is an insistence on both how emotions are interpreted and expressed (their meaning making) along with their physical manifestation (e.g. breaking out in sweat, before you perhaps fully realise you are nervous). Wetherell argues that we understand our own sense of 'nervousness' and what has caused it, at the same time as we 'feel' that emotion in our bodies (of course this interpretation can change over time as the person reflects or discusses the emotional response with others). From this perspective, physical, symbolic and relational elements come together and produce emotions. As Wetherell (2015, p. 86) notes 'body/brain landscapes, meaning making, feeling, communication, and social action entangle and become figured together in emotion episodes. The affective and the discursive intertwine'.

In everyday life, affective practices are typically repetitive and familiar, but as in any social practice they are also flexible and can change with novel social experiences (see also Reckwitz, 2002). As such, affective practices are a sketch, rather than a recipe or rulebook. An over-reliance on the idea of feeling rules, has the drawback of not quite being able to capture the mobile, context specificity, and flexible patterning characteristic of emotion in action.[2]

In empirical application, we can distinguish between *affective practices* – ways of 'doing' emotion, such as 'being enthusiastic', which help us explore the experiences of emotion in everyday life (Wetherell, 2012) – and *affective discourses* which involve an articulation, mobilisation, and organisation of affect and discourse which imply the way things 'should' be, and are typically used in the public sphere as a rhetorical device (Wetherell, McCreanor, McConville, Moewaka Barnes, & Le Grice, 2015, p. 57). It is important to make this distinction because in a social movements context, we are interested in everyday emotional experiences (affective practices), and how these become mobilised in the context of building and sustaining a social project (in our case study, stopping CSG). Affective practices capture the idea that people express emotions in particular ways that are familiar, but that also intersect with individual experience and the particularity of context (and hence, emotions are not a robotic repetition of past behaviour).

In our study, the affective practice approach helps us to identify the role of the rural context in shaping emotions and their expression. We examine how affective practices are involved in mobilisation and in the development of alliances between different groups. At the same time, we are also interested in how emotions are enrolled to convince others. That is, how the development of affective discourses may shape how the movement feels about itself and how these feelings help sustain the momentum of the movement.

Affective discourses involve articulating relationships of proximity and distance, and inclusion and exclusion that constitute an emotional frame, in our case for the politics surrounding the proposed CSG development. They often imply positions and repertoires which naturalise some emotions over others; 'typically, an agent or a circumstance to blame becomes marked out, often combined with innocence and passivity on the part of the disappointed and aggrieved *who thus become not actors but reactors*' (our emphasis) (Wetherell et al., 2015, p. 58). Our analysis not only emphasises those affective practices that are distinctly rural, or those that participants articulate in relation to their involvement in the anti-CSG movement, but also how these practices 'spatialize, demarcate and place communities and social groups' (Wetherell et al., 2015, p. 60). The relationship between social power and affect is dynamic and, for social movement research, this is of particular relevance. As in Clough's (2012) empirical work, affective practices are embedded in the enterprise of social change, but must also respond to external (and internal) threats and challenges. As such we will explore how affective discourses are fundamental to the experiences of doing activism, building alliances, and positioning anti-CSG actors in relation to actors outside the movement.

Background: the anti-CSG movement in Narrabri and beyond

Our paper focuses on the movement opposing the Narrabri Gas Project (NGP), a proposed coal seam gas project south of the town of Narrabri, 500km north-west of Sydney. The proponent of the Narrabri Gas Project (NGP), the energy corporation Santos, proposes to develop 850 gas wells across a project area of approximately 1,000 square kilometres. The majority of the project area occurs within the Pilliga State Forest, with the remainder on privately owned agricultural land. The project area for the proposed CSG development falls entirely within in the boundaries of Narrabri

Shire, with a population of around 14,000 people across 13,000km^2. Agriculture is the dominant sector in the region which includes a variety of crops, most famously cotton, and grazing enterprises (Narrabri Shire Council, n.d.). Concerns about potential negative impacts from the NGP strongly align with complaints against CSG in other parts of Australia and around the world – including issues around water, agriculture, human health, socio-economic impacts, community well-being, property rights, procedural justice, governance and regulation, the natural environment and climate change (Arashiro, 2017; Labouchardiere, Goater, & Beeton, 2014; Lloyd, Luke, & Boyd, 2013; Measham et al., 2016; Taylor, Sandy, & Raphael, 2013). Risks to underground water are particularly emphasised in the Narrabri region, given the local agricultural industry's reliance on ground water and the proximity of the Great Artesian Basin (De Rijke, Munro, & Zurita, 2016; also see Hendriks, Duus, & Ercan, 2016). Our case study has also revealed emotional distress as a significant impact of CSG development – a dimension that has been observed in other research on extractive industries, whereby individuals and communities can suffer from changes to familiar and cherished landscapes, interruptions to their sense of place, and pressures from local socio-economic changes (Askew & Askland, 2016; Askland, 2017; Connor, Albrecht, Higginbotham, Freeman, & Smith, 2004; Everingham, Devenin, & Collins, 2015; Ey et al., 2017; Hossain et al., 2013; Lai et al., 2017; Sherval & Hardiman, 2014).

Community opposition to the NGP began to emerge from around 2009 and rapidly gained momentum. Spills and other incidents in the early stages of local CSG exploration coalesced with circulating 'horror stories' about CSG production in Queensland's new gas fields, galvanising concern (Askew & Askland, 2016). By August 2010, there was sufficient community agitation about the potential combined impacts of coal and CSG on surface and ground water in the Narrabri region to prompt the NSW government to commission a comprehensive water impact study.[3] In the following months, the Lock the Gate Alliance was officially formed, bringing environmentalists, farmers and other concerned individuals into coalition in their joint fight against the CSG industry (see Colvin, Witt, & Lacey, 2015). Facebook and other social media sites quickly developed into an essential communicative backbone of the burgeoning anti-CSG movement, helping to mobilise and facilitate contact between diverse and geographically dispersed individuals and communities (Hendriks et al., 2016).

The diversity of individuals and groups opposed to the NGP echoes a pattern in the anti-CSG movement more broadly. Concerned citizens from across the political spectrum are finding common ground; significant tensions that have at times existed between farmers, environmentalists and Aboriginal people over resource extraction, environmental management and land tenure (Lockie, 2000; McCarthy, 2017; Ritter, 2014; Vincent & Neale, 2016), in at least some respects, are being transcended to create alliances of 'strange bedfellows'[4] against the common enemy of CSG production. The large number of concerns bundled around CSG might help to explain the number and diversity of detractors. Research has also shown that apparent disparity within anti-CSG coalitions belies consistent and compatible personal values of those involved (Colvin et al., 2015).

Local opposition to the NGP is largely comprised of farmers in the Narrabri region, but also includes some residents of Narrabri and surrounding towns. Farmers concerned about the construction of a gas pipeline on black soil plains were among the first

to oppose CSG in the region. More recently, People for the Plains, a grassroots organisation concerned about the proposed project, has been a central farming-oriented community opposition group based around Narrabri. Members of Coonabarabran Residents Against Gas (CRAG), a group based in a town over 100km south of Narrabri, includes a number of people who have a longer history with environmental activism in the region and who are generally more accustomed to 'direct action' interventions. There are local 'loops' of Knitting Nannas Against Gas (KNAG),[5] as well as individuals who do not associate with particular groups, but who have played pivotal roles in organising bush camps in the Pilliga Forest and activities such as the 'Pilliga Push' – a rolling summer of activism in 2015–16. There are a number of local Aboriginal people who have been actively involved in the opposition to CSG (see Norman, 2014), and there has been an effort across the other opposition groups to create space for Indigenous voices.[6] Larger state- and nation-wide organisations, such as The Wilderness Society and Lock the Gate Alliance, have also played a role in the north-west. In early 2012, an umbrella group was formed – the North West Alliance – in an effort to coordinate strategies among the member groups.

As with Australian anti-CSG networks more generally, the historical tensions between many of the constituent member groups of the anti-CSG movement in the Narrabri region are significant. The rapid development of the cotton industry in the region from the late 1950s brought conflict over water and chemical use, and later genetic modification (Askew & Askland, 2016); the earlier colonial history saw an often aggressive taking over of Aboriginal land, with long-lasting consequences for Indigenous people (see Norman, 2014). In such a potentially fraught and emotionally-charged context, a focus on the role of emotions in mobilising and building solidarity is particularly fitting, although to date this has not been examined.

Methods

Our analysis is part of a larger research project examining the conflict around the Narrabri Gas Project drawing on over 45 semi-structured interviews and extensive qualitative data collected over three separate fieldtrips to the Narrabri region between November 2015 and June 2017. To identify the role of emotions in building and sustaining the anti-CSG movement in the region, we particularly focus on a subset of 12 semi-structured interviews with the key actors who have been active in the anti-CSG movement around Narrabri. Our purpose here is not to make generalisations based on these interviews but rather generate context specific insights about the role of emotions in the anti-CSG movement from the perspective of the actors involved in this movement. In other words, our analysis does not seek to exhaustively explain the broad spread of experiences of CSG activism, rather it seeks to understand the context specific factors at play (as suggested by Guest, Bunce, & Johnson, 2006).

Semi-structured interviews offer a powerful way to understand these factors and the emotions at play when individuals engage with social movements. Participants are encouraged to share rich biographical information, providing an opportunity to understand how emotionally infused experiences, relationships, and events relate to political engagement. Our interviews focused on participants' engagement in the CSG debate, their concerns, and perspectives on the nature of the debate over time. Members of our

research team have also engaged in participant observation through attending a large anti-CSG event in Narrabri in November 2015, and sitting down with participants during a highway protest in June 2016.

Much has been written about the methodological difficulties in seeking to understand the emotions of others, particularly in a cultural context in which emotions are understood as private and as juxtaposed with reason (Wettergren, 2015). Yet, emotion pervades narrative, and emotions are narrative in their character (Kleres, 2011; Wettergren, 2015). As such, in listening to the recorded interviews, we paid particular attention to how emotions were embedded in stories of movement participation and characterisation. When participants explicitly discussed emotions (for instance when describing feeling 'burnt out', or 'angry'), we analysed *how* these emotions were discussed and what they meant to participants. When emotions were directly expressed, we paid attention to how they were expressed and what this meant to participants and to the broader anti-CSG movement (see Katriel, 2015 for a similar focus). Importantly, our analysis drew on a broader understanding of emotional content than just what was directly discussed or expressed. We also considered the tone of voice, narrative structure, and use of metaphor to understand where and how emotions surfaced in relation to the emotions of the anti-CSG movement. In what follows, we focus on the key findings emerging from our analysis of emotions as affective practices in the context of the anti-CSG movement formed around the controversial Narrabri Gas Project.

Findings: sites of and for emotions in the anti-CSG movement

Actors involved in the anti-CSG movement have developed a range of affective repertoires by drawing on a combination of identities, social ties, and organisational forms that constitute everyday social life (Tilly, 2006). As argued by Wright and Boudet (2012), these everyday experiences of actors make up the context which has historically been missing from explanations of mobilisation against large energy projects. We argue that these experiences, and in particular the affective dimensions of these experiences, are core to explaining the emergence and dynamics of the anti-CSG movement in Narrabri.

Our analysis reveals three different sites in which emotions as affective practices play a crucial role. These include: i) the site of 'the self', where emotions are entangled in individual's experiences of mobilisation; ii) in-group and between-groups sites, where emotions are embedded in alliance building and where they help to sustain movement participation; and iii) public sites, where emotions help in claim making and persuading others. The distinctions between these three sites are blurred, but in what follows we distinguish them for analytical purposes.

The site of the self: the role of emotions in individuals' experiences of mobilisation

We start with the self as a site of affective discursive activity. It is through the embodied experience of being an activist that the role of affect in anti-CSG activism is revealed. For instance, emotions can drive activist involvement, be expressed as doubt about risking participation in certain 'actions', and be experienced as the 'rollercoaster' of an

activist life that must be managed – in private and with trusted others. As one might expect, during interviews there was a tendency for participants to focus on the substance of their concerns rather than dwell for long on emotions. Similarly, while participants occasionally expressed overt emotions, often emotional content was implied through descriptions of how they became involved and the issues that most concerned them, as well as through the simple evidence of their long-term commitment and engagement. This points to an important dimension of the role of emotions in the anti-NGP campaign. The depth of emotion is often hinted at, rather than openly reflected, as it might be in other movements that have more expressive affective practices in their repertoires. Emotional reflexivity – and having spaces to express difficult emotions associated with activism – appears to be a key element in maintaining movements and managing burn out (Brown & Pickerill, 2009; Gould, 2012). As discussed below, emotional reflexivity does not appear to be a core part of the Narrabri movement's repertoire of affective practices, although the potential negative implications of this (in terms of burn out) is mitigated by collective action (such as participating in community events).

Our findings resonate with that of Woods et al. (2012), who describe how people express a range of emotions in the face of CSG development: from love of place (expressed in the use of phrases such as 'this is a special place'); to anger, fear, and distress at the idea of CSG development and its associated risks; to feelings of betrayal and frustration at the sense of disrespect from authority figures. Most of our participants were new to activism and so did not have an established repertoire of activist affect to draw on, or the emotional resilience developed through long-lasting campaigns (explored e.g. in Rodgers, 2010). In their articulation of anger, we see bewilderment, a note of outrage, and a sense of surprise about the government and the CSG industry's willingness and power to override their sense of justice, civil rights, and democracy. As one participant said:

> … "I really want to be here [in this region and community], how dare you threaten us, we've just settled here." I don't want to have this threat of CSG over our heads. And then I just started to become more – just wanted to learn more about it and then the more I learnt the scarier that I was like, "Oh my gosh, this can't be true".[7]

Again as intimated in the emotions ladder developed by Woods et al. (2012), we can see in participants' stories how anger/fear is escalated to frustration against authority figures. This can then lead to active involvement in even the more extreme tactics associated with activism – tactics, outside of their usual experiences such as locking their bodies on to gas infrastructure or machinery ('locking on'). The anger and indignation stems from a sense of being profoundly disrespected by authority figures and a sense that the risks and impacts associated with CSG, especially to water, are unacceptably high.[8]

In one participant's view, independence and not wanting 'to be impeded by others all that much', is a distinctly rural characteristic, particularly among farmers.[9] This sentiment can perhaps be understood in terms of the relative isolation of rural areas accentuating the value of autonomy and resourcefulness. Feeling intruded upon is then particularly confronting to prevailing rural identities, leading to an acute sense of frustration and anger.

As others have argued, the identity shift required by a person moving from being relatively apolitical to taking direct action requires not just a cognitive liberation, but also an emotional liberation. Anger plays a specific role in emotional liberation, and results in the cutting of ties with prevailing systems of power and authority (Flam, 2015, further elaborated by Benski & Langman, 2013). Our findings suggest that anger is often fuelled by a perceived lack of respect and engagement by authority figures. As one respondent said 'It's a highly emotive debate and it's emotive because *nobody's bloody well listening to us*.'[10] What is interesting here too is that 'direct action' tactics represent a particular repertoire of contention usually associated (in this region) with environmental activists in anti-logging protests. Participants' willingness to engage in direct action, as well as activist work in general, is noteworthy given many movement participants described themselves as being time poor, and the fact that historically farmers have generally not engaged in radical forms of protest. It is worth noting that it was not only non-local activists that brought these tactics to the case study region; anti-logging and anti-mining activity was already occurring in the region, so familiarity with direct action amongst a minority of locals in the movement is likely to have facilitated the adoption of this repertoire for those new to activism.

For many local people involved in anti-CSG activism in our case study, the novelty and excitement associated with experiences of direct action often lay in tension with a desire not to be out of step with the broader community. Discomfort with being at odds with the broader local community was a common theme implied in many participant comments. This was also commonly expressed as a reluctance to become engaged in confrontational encounters with those in their community they knew disagreed with them.

Certainly, ambivalence and reluctance also characterised many participants' discussion about their involvement in anti-CSG activities, with one person noting that they had moved to the country explicitly for a 'quiet retirement'[11]; another noting 'I'm branded an activist – and that brand carries a person who doesn't want to wear it'.[12] This reluctance stemmed in part from the emotional energy and time burden required to be activists.

Participants generally did not express explicit pride in being an anti-CSG activist *per se* – instead, people expressed joy and pride when their efforts were recognised across mainstream media outlets, or by prominent commentators. In other words, there was a strong desire to normalise anti-CSG sentiment, and for many participants – especially those new to being politically active – a feeling of frustration that it was not already more mainstream. A few of our participants did mention a sense of empowerment from learning new skills related to campaign management and communicating with the media. Moreover, while fewer participants described enjoying activism for its own sake, for one retiree and migrant, involvement in activism (beginning with other environmental issues prior to the CSG controversy) was a way to express her connection to place:

> For me [involvement in the debate is] doing community as well as attention to place, but a lot of that is actually 'doing community', that's what I call it. Just being involved is part, as a way of belonging in place.[13]

For this participant and several others, it appears that involvement in groups such as Knitting Nannas Against Gas (KNAG) provided a sense of connection and belonging to

community that might otherwise be quite difficult when not actively involved in the workforce. This experience also highlights that emotions around CSG activism mean different things depending on life stage and the potential effects of CSG on one's life and livelihood. Those who were more actively reliant on groundwater for farming talked less about the benefits of connection to community and more about the risks of CSG. One participant referred to a farmer she knew:

> She said "I have nightmares, I have nightmares. They're drilling through the Great Artesian Basin". It just absolutely absorbs her completely.[14]

While individuals' anger against industry and government – actively fostered on Facebook sites (e.g. People for the Plains Facebook Group) – helped maintain involvement in the movement, the negative impact it had on individuals' lives also played a dampening effect. Several participants referred to feeling drained, tired, and stressed by the work and the ongoing uncertainty associated with whether or not the development would go ahead. At least two of our participants had decided to opt out of the activist work and described being 'burnt out' by its intensity. One participant expressed a stronger and more serious concern that the emotional toll could quite conceivably lead to suicide,[15] a possibility fresh in people's minds following the recent suicide of prominent anti-CSG activist George Bender. George Bender's suicide had become a highly public discussion point in the national controversy over CSG, played out on national television, in press statements and news articles, and with a later Federal Senate Inquiry being named in his honour (Drapalski, 2015; Lock the Gate Alliance, 2015; Roche, 2015; Willacy, 2015).

While it is a theme that would require further research, participants' reluctance to elaborate on the emotional toll from activist work seems consistent with research that identifies stigma being attached to the expression of vulnerable emotions in rural communities. This then presents the possibility that without more explicit attention to emotional distress caused by CSG, the rates of burn out and/or depression could increase and present a force for the de-mobilisation of the movement. A different, perhaps parallel scenario is that for some, anger continues to be scaled or 'ramped up'. One participant elaborated this:

> [Local farmers opposing CSG] might become a bit like French farmers, eventually, and become a little bit less inclined to be polite. The first response [from Australian farmers] is always: be polite. That is the difficulty of getting up a political campaign… You can't just go out and slag[16] people. But I don't know if that politeness will last. If they get the go-ahead here and they start wanting to create a gas field. [17]

The anger and distress experienced by anti-CSG participants is often offset by the excitement and sense of empowerment they feel when their efforts are recognised by the mainstream media or prominent people, or when they try new tactics, and in the moment of collective action. Yet allusions to burn out and to the negative toll on people's lives, often expressed almost as an aside, hints at the cost of ongoing activist work with its associated ups and downs and uncertainties.

In-group and between group sites: the role of emotions in alliance-building

Our analysis shows that emotions play a particularly important role within the anti-CSG movement, shaping the very emergence of the movement. It is also where we see the possibilities for aspects of rural sensibilities being re-made; where for instance what it is to be a woman, Indigenous (or for that matter an Indigenous woman) have begun to take on a new meaning as the movement has provided opportunities for these groups to take on the responsibility of coordinating and enacting protest actions.

Significantly, it is the 'politeness' – and the emotional labour this entails – that rural people expect of each other which plays such an important role in the building of movement solidarity:

> . . . an important way of operating in the country is you don't upset people, because it's part of a survival mentality. You might actually want that person that you've completely annoyed at some point, it's how you live. It's part of living in a civil way.[18]

Avoiding confrontation, and by implication the outward expression of emotion, was referred to several times in terms of activist tactics. It was also mentioned in relation to the workings of a widely perceived important umbrella group for the movement, the North West Alliance (NWA). Early meetings of NWA were overall characterised by goodwill, but some participants described individual 'loose cannons' who were frustrated with the content or pace of the discussions and who subsequently left the meeting. These same people would ultimately return to meetings, which points to the active emotional management required to continue participating in the movement. In relation to developing more tolerance and 'managing oneself' one participant noted, 'the more we met, the more we went on, the more we evolved skills to kind of keep that stuff'.[19] Another stressed the work that they have done in their group to foster restraint and ethical conduct among group members:

> We've spent a lot of time saying "you cannot disrespect people in the community", particularly other individuals in our community. We all have to live together after this. . .. We've made really strong rules in our group that you don't name people and you don't disrespect people and you don't drag them through the mud.[20]

Another participant[21] emphasised the importance of not being 'elitist' in campaign work – contrasting local grassroots anti-CSG engagement with other approaches to anti-coal campaigning in the area that sought direct influence with politicians. This points to ongoing learning and reflection, not just on the tactics of mobilisation, but on the importance of relationships of trust and solidarity with a broad section of the community. We would argue here too, that the values around mutual respect pursued by the local anti-CSG movement have provided an opportunity for women and Indigenous groups to express themselves politically in a safe and respectful space. The dominance of women in the movement has been noted by participants themselves (both female and male), although there is a variety of interpretations of the cause of this.

In small communities such as the one in our case study, robust relationships between campaigners that involve trust and care are perhaps even more important than in larger urban centres. Unlike the professional organisers we spoke with, local anti-CSG campaigners cannot easily take a break from the constancy of concern about the future

impacts of CSG on their livelihoods and communities, or from the implications of a hypothetical break down in community relations, a point that the organisers made and understood well. In that sense, trusting each other, sharing the joys of campaign wins, as well as the connection over the lived experience of activism is critically important. One organiser emphasised this point at length:

> . . . Because we recognise that relationships are the most important thing that we have in all of this. We don't have the money and the resources and the government support, we just have one another and we have our social networks and we have the collective intelligence and networks of all the people that we work with, so maintaining good relationships is number one.[22]

In our case study, affective practices associated with cultivating good relationships have a distinctly local, rural character centring on values of hospitality, loyalty and generosity. Examples include a morning tea with scones at a campaign meeting held on Mother's Day, local restaurants staying open late to cater for visitor activists ('like' groups), and the presence of children and a festive atmosphere at a highway protest. The expression of emotions such as joy and a sense of connection, such as through a shared meal, opens up spaces of solidarity (Sziarto & Leitner, 2010). In all these examples, we see that alongside more confrontational tactics like protests and locking on, there is a lot of emphasis on caring for other campaigners and for creating spaces to build, maintain and strengthen relationships. One example was weekly Knitting Nanna meetings at a local cafe for people to 'do' activist work that is in keeping with a peaceful and non-confrontational repertoire of contention, and a creative way of combining anger with joy (Ercan, 2017; Ercan & Hendriks, 2018). These affective practices are key for sustaining the movement, as they offer a way of mitigating burn out mentioned above.

There was evidence in our case study that people actively foster affective practices involving mutual respect and trust among different local action groups, which include farmers and non-farmers. Members of Coonabarabran Residents Against Gas (CRAG) would attend actions organised by People for the Plains in a support capacity, while being mindful not to steal the thunder of the organising group by tweeting breaking news about the event. In another example, a couple who considered themselves long-standing environmental activists deliberately held back from emphasising the issue of climate change in early meetings as they were unsure that fellow (farmer) participants would share their views on the issue. These interviewees described their delight in later meetings when several farmers raised the links between CSG and climate change on their own terms, demonstrating, to them, the value of the emotional management associated with being patient and non-confrontational.[23]

A final example is the involvement of local Indigenous people in the movement against the NGP. This is no small achievement in light of a history of colonialism and a context imbued with mutual suspicion and segregation. One organiser believed humour deployed by Indigenous participants, as well as Indigenous art and performance has played a role in facilitating an ongoing 'conversation' between non-Indigenous and Indigenous locals (see also, Chazan, 2016). That ceremony and dance is being accepted as part of the repertoires of contention is perhaps indicative of a mutual respect emerging out of the process of mobilising against CSG (see Figure 1).

Figure 1. Gomeroi Dancers at an anti-CSG event (screenshot from Pearce, 2014).

Challenges associated with maintaining positive relationships cannot be underestimated, particularly in alliances where there are internal power imbalances between participants that tend to undermine solidarity (Flam, 2015). References to minor conflicts on Facebook by participants within the anti-CSG movement point to some of the risks to relationships, especially when people are 'feeling up against a wall, and tired and strung-out'.[24] People can take on the attitude of a 'keyboard warrior' and through this, risk alienating fellow campaigners. Learning from this, there have been conscious attempts to have strategic face to face conversations and phone calls, so to leave Facebook as a space for publicising events, sharing news and expressing solidarity (Hendriks et al., 2016).

The expression of emotions in public arenas

In general, anti-CSG campaigners must tread carefully in the use of emotions and associated affective discourses in the public arena. CSG is overwhelmingly framed as a technical question by both industry and government, excluding non-technical issues such as place attachment in decisions of whether development should go ahead or not. Proponents of CSG have frequently characterised arguments against the industry as emotional, usually as a means of discrediting their merit (Miskelly & Daniel, 2017). This has forced CSG opponents to become more self-conscious about how they use emotion in their public arguments, and to temper their own experiences of emotionality with peer reviewed science. A key response has been to display different emotions to different audiences (see also, Flam, 2015, p. 267), all the while projecting a position of being 'reasonable'. For instance, one participant stressed that 'all we can do as a group is make sure whatever we communicate is well-informed and factual and moderate and respectful'.[25]

Burden of proof standards can be relaxed when displaying emotions on social media to a group that may be more sympathetic; a higher degree of overt emotional

expression, including anger and expressions of solidarity, can be found online compared to traditional print media. Emotions pitched to sympathetic audiences are different to the more neutral emotions that are likely to be displayed in formal proceedings, or the hostile emotions that may emerge in direct action protests. Indeed, social media has been critical for building and maintaining networks of supporters and for coordinating offline action. This is especially important in a rural context where people are scattered across a large area. Research has previously found around 20 Facebook sites that are wholly or significantly focussed on opposing the NGP (Hendriks et al., 2016), and numerous participants have stressed the important of both Facebook and Twitter in the campaign.

All this being said, activists argue that to resonate with a broader public, they have had to appeal in emotional as well as rational terms. Partly in response to the fraught role of emotions in the public arena, anti-CSG actors have tended to draw on affective discourses that universalise concerns rather than stress the private fears and anxieties of local residents, such as those related to love of landscapes and attachment to the 'feel' of their communities and towns. Here then we see the strategic deployment of emotions (Juris, 2008). In emotional claims to outside audiences, there is typically a focus on 'future generations' and a sense of sacredness associated with water and food production, thus appealing to emotions that an audience can accept/emote. The claimants embedded in affective discourses typically portray farmers and rural people as pitted against rich, powerful and profit-motivated multinational players supported by morally corrupt government players. One tactic deployed as part of this affective discourse was a series of surveys conducted by local anti-CSG groups. The surveys consisted of door knocking across entire sub-regions and asking people whether they would prefer their regions to remain 'gasfield free'. The results were then publicised in major events such as the 'Big Picture' – in which signs were displayed showing proportions of opposition to CSG in particular communities (see Figure 2). The moral emotions appealed to here was a sense of fairness and justice in the context of decision making and a local democratic sensibility.

The movement has also drawn on important affective discourse associated with the role of farmers in Australian culture. We see this in the dominance of affective discourses associated with farmers' concerns (e.g. 'farms not gas') over themes such as climate justice, or even land sovereignty. The symbolic power of farming in Australian culture enables another affective discourse prevalent in our respondents – a defiance and determination reflected in their strong claims such as 'we're not going anywhere'.

The primacy of locals' emotions in the affective discursive repertoires appears to be an important feature of the anti-CSG movement as a whole, with one respondent stating:

> I think there's beauty in diversity and seemingly dis-organisation. I don't think it is one thing for everyone. Trying to put us in a box together would probably lead to conflict that didn't get us anywhere. I get very inspired by the diverse range of groups all over Australia that are connected loosely but really driving their own agenda and putting their own local vision forward… it's definitely a movement of some description, and it's definitely having an influence. And definitely being driven by locals in each of their regions and I think that's maybe the strength of it in a way.[26]

Figure 2. 'Gasfield free' declaration percentages, at Narrabri 'Big Picture' event November 2015. Photo supplied by author.

While the anti-CSG camp is most often criticised for its emotionality by others in the public arena (see for example Energy Resources Information Centre, 2016; Wonhas, 2014), there is often failure by these same actors to recognise the passionate affective discourses employed by pro-CSG actors who focus on the importance of jobs in a context of an ageing regional population, where young people leave and do not return (Connell & McManus, 2016; Hogan & Young, 2013; Measham & Fleming, 2014). Indeed, it is striking that both affective discourses emphasise what is at stake is the very viability of regional areas, suggestive of a deep anxiety felt by many people in regional areas on this issue.

From the perspective of movement participants, the playing out of the local CSG debate on the state and national stage is a win for the movement because it shows it is more than just locals who 'care' about CSG. Movement participants have realised that technical models of risks are not going to win over the public; if the debate remains on those terms, they are likely to lose.[27] It is by appealing to moral emotions around farming, that movement participants can justify the radical and 'uncivil' activities such as locking on, framing this as a last desperate act in the face of an unresponsive government.

Conclusion

This paper has revealed that the mobilisation against CSG can be better understood by including a consideration of the role of emotion. Using affective practices as our conceptual lens, we defined emotion as an embodied way of making sense of experiences. We have explored how the distinctly 'rural' affective practices and social context have shaped the opportunities taken by, and limitations placed on,

movement participants. We find that that large-scale energy projects, such as the proposed CSG project in Narrabri, mobilise a rich range of emotions: from love of place; to anger, fear and distress at the idea of CSG development and its associated risks; to feelings of betrayal and frustration at the sense of disrespect from authority figures.

Our analysis reveals two crucial insights regarding the dynamic and combinatory role of the rich variety of emotions in the context of the anti-CSG movement. First, it shows that while anger is the central emotion fuelling the anti-CSG movement in and around Narrabri, how people 'do anger' in a rural context is key to understanding how movement participants come together and negotiate their ideological differences. Interpersonal interactions in a rural context tend to be characterised not just by civility but by hospitality, loyalty and inclusivity. Participation in community events and holding back from confrontational interactions are key to building solidarity across difference. The need for flexible affective discourses around 'doing' anger that can incorporate a range of new activist skills and strategies also points to the the importance of establishing and maintaining relationships with others who can share their knowledge and experience. It also shows that the CSG movement is remaking aspects of local culture, in the sense that it is providing more avenues of expression for women and Indigenous groups (though these of course are constrained by other affective discourses that may in other contexts exclude these groups). At the same time, a tendency to gloss over emotional impacts of activism, and to withdraw in the face of 'burn out', indicates that opening up spaces to explore emotions in a reflexive manner could reduce the demobilising effects of negative emotions.

Second, our analysis suggests that the actors involved in the anti-CSG movement do not only carry the negative emotions of anger and frustration. While anger seems to be the central sentiment mobilising many anti-CSG actors, it is the combination of anger with the joy of social connection which helps to in sustain anti-CSG movement in regional Australia. There was not a commonly expressed explicit pride in being an anti-CSG activist *per se*, but the movement participants expressed joy in coming together, 'doing community' and employing a wide range of creative protest activities, such as those performed by the Knitting Nannas Against Gas. These activities also offered a space for movement actors to withdraw in the face of 'burn out' and served to open up spaces to explore emotions in a reflexive manner that could reduce the demobilising effects of emotions. Our findings confirm the 'moral battery' argument suggested by Jasper (2011), who notes that just as a battery works through the tension between its positive and negative poles, a combination of a negative and a positive emotion can operate as the 'moral battery' of a social movement driving action forward.

Our research also highlights the way in which rural identities can shape the expression of emotion in very district ways, and in ways that are distinct from urban actors. This is an important finding that future research will need to be attentive to. More broadly, our study affirms the efforts of social movement scholars who emphasise the combinatory, flexible and unexpected nature of how emotions animate social movements. Framing affect as patterned, yet flexible, frees us to consider how emotional experience and expression for movement participants has been not just relational, but also dynamic and creative. If we are not only looking at 'rules' or 'patterns', but also at how actors feel about the issues at stake, we can better understand how movement

actors can go from being relatively politically disengaged, to participating actively in direct actions and protests.

Finally, we also argue that examining emotions simultaneously at different sites (in our case, individual, in group, and public sites), and over time, is important for disentangling its different effects on mobilisation and alliance building. Of course, this sort of methodological approach could potentially be modified and extended across time, and to different places and issues.

Notes

1. Gould draws on the sociological concept of habitus to explain the patterning of how people 'do'
   emotion in a manner which is largely unconscious. Habitus refers to a set of embodied dispositions but must also be understood within broader Bourdieuian social theory in terms of how it intersects with capital, and field (for further conceptual elaboration, see Grenfell, 2008). 'Structures of feeling' is an idea developed by Raymond Williams (1961) to characterise a whole society or group of societies during a particular period in history. It refers to a sense of what guides people's behaviour and culture, beyond official discourses in particular periods of time, such as the feeling of risk anxiety in modern capitalist societies (Hoggett & Thompson, 2012).
2. A note about the terminology of 'emotion' and 'affect' in empirical analysis: 'affect' is generally used to describe generic feeling experiences, whereas 'emotion' describes more specific reactions.
3. The Namoi Water Study (Schlumberger Water Services, 2012).
4. Phrase taken from (Colvin et al., 2015).
5. This group was formed in June 2012 when a small group of women from the Northern Rivers area of New South Wales – self-described as 'nannas' – formed to protest against proposed coal seam gas development. KNAG protests CSG development by gathering and knitting in public spaces.
6. Interviewees #21 and #22, 24.11.15; #39, 17.3.17.
7. Interviewee #19, 24.11.15.
8. Interviewees #23, 25.11.15 and #33, 25.11.15.
9. Interviewee #12, 24.11.15.
10. Interviewee #5, 22.11.15.
11. Interviewee #18, 24.11.15.
12. Interviewee #5, 22.11.15.
13. Interviewee #16, 24.11.15.
14. Interviewee #15, 24.11.15.
15. Interviewee # 5, 22.11.15.
16. 'To slag' is a common Australian term meaning to denigrate or criticise someone.
17. Interviewee #12, 24.11.15.
18. Interviewee #12, 24.11.15.
19. Interviewee #16, 24.11.15.
20. Interviewee #33, 25.6.16.
21. Interviewee #23, 25.11.15.
22. Interviewee #39, 17.3.17.
23. Interviewees #21 and #22, 21.11.15.
24. Interviewee #39, 17.3.17.
25. Interviewee #33, 25.6.16.
26. Interviewee #38, 17.3.17.
27. Interviewee #38, 17.3.17.

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